

Honorable Birch Bayh
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bayh:

I read with great interest your remarks in the June 2 Congressional Record accompanying the introduction of S. 1841, which would completely bar the use of the polygraph examination in an employment context by this and other Federal agencies. Your remarks indicated a willingness to listen to reasonable argument regarding the need for a very limited use of the polygraph in the intelligence field.

I believe the polygraph examination is essential to the security program of the Central Intelligence Agency. The predominant use of the polygraph by CIA is as part of the hiring process. After a decision to hire an applicant for a staff position has been made (based on the needs of the Agency and the applicant's qualifications), our Office of Security conducts an investigation to determine if the applicant is of excellent character and of unquestioned loyalty, integrity, discretion, and trustworthiness. Upon completion of the investigation and the accomplishment of medical examinations, a polygraph examination is adminis-

tered as the final portion of the hiring process.

We at CIA are cognizant of the danger of abuse inherent in the use of any instrument used to distinguish truths from untruths. Consequently, we have adopted strict procedures to forestall abuses and protect those taking the examination. These include:

--each applicant for employment is notified at the time he is given an application of the intent to use a polygraph examination and each must sign an advance consent statement;

--advance interviews with the Office of Personnel and the Office of Medical Services determine if information has been developed as a result of their screening procedures that might preclude the advisability of conducting a polygraph interview;

--notification of the privilege against self-incrimination if a question may pertain to a violation of the criminal law;

--review of the general content of all questions that the applicant will be asked is made before testing to assure

that all questions . . . relate directly to security considerations (no questions on religious thought or practices or political affiliations of a non-subversive nature are permitted);

--the applicant is told that the examination may be monitored and possibly recorded to let him know there are no hidden procedures;

--random monitoring by a specialized supervisor to insure that no improper questions are asked;

--maintenance of polygraph records in separate files with very strict need-to-know rules governing access;

--no polygraph-acquired information can be released outside the Agency without my approval or that of the Deputy Director and only if such a release is necessary in the interest of national security;

--the polygraph examiner makes no recommendation as to the security suitability of the person tested;

--the polygraph report is evaluated as but one element in the total investigative report.

In addition to the above, in order to insure that the polygraph examination program maintains rigid adherence to established standards, spot interviews have been conducted with applicants who have completed polygraph tests. In one program, several thousand female applicants were interviewed after their polygraph examinations and there were no indications of abuses.

Finally, the selection of polygraph officers is extremely discriminating as to their qualifications, intelligence, integrity, and high character. They are given a rigorous training program which is a continuing process to keep them abreast of developments in their professional field. In this respect, CIA has maintained a vigorous research effort inquiring into new techniques and equipment to insure that highest standards are maintained.

I would very much like the opportunity to talk with you personally regarding CIA's polygraph program. I understand my Legislative Counsel, Mr. George Cary, has already suggested this. I would be pleased to host a breakfast meeting at the Agency's Langley headquarters, and I am asking Mr. Carey to contact your office to determine if this might be arranged.

Sincerely,

W. E. Colby
Director